

## **How To Protect Your Domestic Birds from Avian Influenza**

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If you are a domestic bird owner, you are the first line of defense against an outbreak of Avian Influenza. Like other viruses and bacteria, Avian Influenza can spread quickly between birds. Prevention measures need not be cumbersome or expensive. A gallon of bleach and a brush will go a long way toward protecting your birds from “outside” disease. To keep your birds safe and healthy, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) suggests you consider following these simple guidelines based on information provided by the United States Department of Agriculture:

### **1. Keep Your Distance.**

- Restrict access to your property and your birds.
- Consider fencing off the area where you keep your birds and make a barrier area if possible. Allow only people who take care of your birds to come into contact with them.
- If visitors have birds of their own, do not let them near your birds.
- Game birds and migratory waterfowl should not have contact with your flock because they can carry germs and diseases.

## **2. Keep It Clean.**

- Keep boots and coveralls near where you keep your birds and wear them whenever you enter the bird area. Take them off as you leave.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before entering and after leaving your bird area.
- Clean cages and change food and water daily.
- Clean and disinfect with bleach equipment that comes in contact with your birds or their droppings, including cages and tools.
- Remove manure before disinfecting.

## **3. Don't Haul Disease Home.**

- If you have been near other birds or bird owners, such as at a feed store, clean and disinfect car and truck tires, poultry cages and equipment before going home.
- Have your birds been to a fair or otherwise been in the proximity of other birds? Keep them separated from the rest of your flock for at least two weeks after the event.
- New birds should be kept separate from your flock for at least 30 days.

## **4. Don't Borrow Disease From Your Neighbor.**

- Do not share lawn and garden equipment, tools, or poultry supplies with your neighbors or other bird owners.
- If you do bring these items home, clean and disinfect them before they reach your property.

## **5. Know the Warning Signs of Infectious Bird Diseases.**

- Sudden increase in bird deaths in your flock
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and nasal discharge
- Watery and green diarrhea
- Lack of energy and poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft- or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs

## **6. Report Sick Birds.**

Don't wait. Early detection can make a difference. Do not handle sick or dead birds. If your birds are sick or dying, call:

- your local cooperative extension service, or
- local veterinarian, or
- the State Veterinarian at (907) 375-8200, or call 1-866-5BRD-FLU, or
- USDA Veterinary Service's toll-free hotline at 1-866-536-7593.

DEC's State Veterinarian program is charged with permitting and monitoring import and export of pets, domestic livestock, and veterinary biologics; as well as surveillance and control of new and emerging animal diseases, zoonotic diseases, and foreign animal diseases.

For more information on Avian flu, please see the DEC website at <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/vet/index.htm> or contact the state veterinarian at 907-745-3236.